

Religious movements in Minnesota /

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RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN MINNESOTA. BY REV. C. HOBART [1851].

The first effort to establish Christianity in this Territory was probably made by the Roman Catholic Church. And although names and dates cannot be furnished by me, yet it is inferable, from the known zeal of her priesthood, and the fact that almost the entire trade with the Indians for more than fifty years has been in the hands of French voyageurs, who are mostly zealous Catholics. Chapels have been built at Lake Pekin, St. Paul, and Mendota. They are rude, primitive structures, built mostly of logs, and appear to have been erected several years. Rev. Mr. Ravoux officiates at St. Paul and Mendota. Last year a missionary was sent to Pembina.

INDIAN MISSIONS—AMERICAN BOARD.

The first in the Territory, so far as I can learn, was established at Sandy Lake in 1832 — Edmund F. Ely , Teacher and Catechist. The second at Leech Lake, 1833— Wm. T. Boutwell , Missionary and Teacher. In 1834 a mission was commenced at Fond du Lac, head of Lake Superior— E. F. Ely , Teacher and Catechist. In 1835 another mission was established at Pokegoma (Snake River). The above were intimately connected with missions at La Pointe and Yellow Lake, now within the bounds of Wisconsin. All the missions within the Territory alluded to above were continued with some variations until within a few years, when they were given up.

In 1835, Dr. Williamson , now of Kaposia, visited this country for the purpose of establishing missions among the 85 Sioux. Since that time, in connection with Messrs. G. H. and S. W. Pond, Stevens, Riggs , and Huggins , and perhaps others, missions have been established at Lac-qui-Parle, Traverse des Sioux, and at several other places along the St. Peters. Also, at Kaposia and Red Wing on the Mississippi. These missions are still

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continued, (with the exception of one at Lake Harriet,) and the missionaries have labored amid difficulties and privations with an amount of zeal and perseverance worthy of all praise, but with comparatively little success.

METHODIST MISSIONS.

Missions were established by the Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1837, by Rev. Alfred Brunson and Rev. David King , at Kaposia and St. Peters among the Sioux. In 1838 these missions were continued; and in 1839, Rev. S. Spates,—Huddleston, George Opway , and John Johnson , (the two last named converted Chippewas,) were sent to Crow Wing and Sandy Lake as missionaries to the Chipewas. The Crow Wing mission, after a few years, was given up, and a mission established at Fond du Lac.

The mission at Kaposia was changed to Red Rock, and continued until 1842, when it was discontinued. At present there are but two missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the Indians, within the bounds of the Territory, viz: At Sandy Lake and Mille Lac—the last established last year. In addition to the missionaries already named, Rev. Messrs. B. F. Kayenaugh, H. Kavenaugh, J. W. Pope, G. Whitford, H. J. Brace , and— McReynolds , have labored more or less in the Territory, among the Indians.

OBERLIN MISSIONS.

In 1843, Rev. F. Ayer * and wife, assisted by Messrs.

* [Rev. Frederic Ayer was born in Old Stookbridge, Mass., in 1803. His father, Rev. Oliver Ayer, removed to Central Now York when the subject of this sketch was three years old. At an early age Mr. Ayer commenced to study for the ministry, but ill health compelled him to abandon the idea, and he engaged in business in Utica and other places. While there, in 1829, he was sent by the A. B. C. F. M. as a teacher in a mission school at Mackinac. Next summer (1830) he went to Lake Superior, and spent some time in the family of Lyman Warren, teaching, and studying the Ojibwa language. The following year

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he spent at Sandy Lake with the late Wm. A. Aitkin, where he opened a school, said to be the first in Minnesota. In 1832 he returned to La Pointe, where he wrote a spelling book for Ojibwa children, which he went to Utica that winter to publish. He returned next summer to Mackinac, where he married Miss Elizabeth Taylor, who had been a teacher there since 1828. Mr. and Mrs. Ayer were at once sent by the A. B. C. F. M. to Yellow Lake, where they were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Borup, the latter of whom had formerly been a pupil at Mackinac. Mr. Ayer erected a dwelling and school house, and was succeeding very well in his work, when he found he could accomplish more at Pokegama, and removed there in the spring of 1836. Here he established a flourishing mission. In 1841 a raid of Sioux broke it up temporarily, and in 1842 Mr. Ayer went east to solicit aid, with much success. At Oberlin, O. he was ordained to the ministry, and soon returned, accompanied by a co-worker, named D. B. Spencer. Mr. Ayer selected Red Lake as his post, and established other missionaries at Leech Lake, Case Lake, Winnebogoshish Lake, &c. The winter of 1847–8 he passed in the Red River settlement. His severe labors brought on bronchitis, and general ill health. He withdrew from his missionary station, and went to what is now Belle Prairie, Minn., where he established a mission school for Ojibwa children, which afterwards became a flourishing white school and was continued for a number of years. He opened a farm here, and was a member of the Minnesota Constitutional Convention in 1857. From 1861 to 1865 he was employed in the Chippewa Agency. In 1865, Mr. and Mrs. Ayer went to Tennessee as a Missionary and teacher to Freedmen, and finally settled at Atlanta. He labored hard for a few months, when illness attacked him, and he died April 28, 1867, aged 64 years—over 40 of which were spent in faithful mission labor. W.]

86 Spencer, Wright, Barnard, and Dr. Lewis, were sent out by a Presbyterian Missionary Society, located at Oberlin, Ohio. Since that time missions have been established by them among the Chippewas at Red Lake, Casa Lake, and Little Lake Winnepeg. These are continued at the present time.

SWISS MISSION.

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This mission was established at Mount Trempeleau, by Rev. Messrs. Denton and Gavin , in 1837, and removed to Red Wing village, at the head of Lake Pepin, in 1838; continued until Mr. Denton 'S health failed, in 1845, when it was given up to the American Board, who still have a mission there.

MISSIONS TO THE INHABITANTS OF MINNESOTA TERRITORY. METHODIST MISSIONS.

The first missionary sent to this country to preach to the 87 white settlers, was the Rev. Mr. Hurlbut , of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He came in the fall of 1844, and left in 1845. In 1846, Rev. J. W. Putnam , of the same church, was appointed to the St. Croix mission, which included all the settlements on the Mississippi and St. Croix rivers, above Point Douglas. He was continued two years, and was succeeded in 1848 by Rev. Benjamin Close .

In 1849, three missionaries were sent to this Territory, and stationed as follows: Stillwater, James Harrington ; St. Anthony Falls, Enos Stevens ; St. Paul, C. Hobart .

In 1850, Rev. James Harrington was re-appointed to Still-water; Rev. L. Dickens to St. Paul; Rev. C. A. Newcombe to St. Anthony Falls. Point Douglas was supplied with Rev. L. Nobles. J. Harrington died in August, which caused the removal of L. Nobles to Stillwater, and the appointment of Rev. J. W. Dow to Point Douglas. C. Hobart was appointed Presiding Elder of Minnesota District, including all Minnesota Territory and that part of Wisconsin north of Wisconsin river.

BAPTIST MISSIONS.

In February, 1849, Rev. Mr. Parsons was appointed by the American Baptist Home Mission Society, as missionary to St. Paul. Arrived May 17th. In the fall of the same year, Rev. Mr. Brown was sent out by the same Society, and stationed at Stillwater. In 1850, Mr.

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Parsons was continued at St. Paul; Mr. Brown appointed to St. Anthony Falls, and Rev. Mr. Werber sent to Stillwater.

PRESBYTERIAN AND CONGREGATIONAL MISSIONS.

In May, 1849, Rev. Mr. Neill visited St. Paul and preached once; returned to Illinois, then to Philadelphia—was appointed missionary to this place by the Home Missionary Society, and returned with his family in July. Rev. Mr. 88 Whitney came to Stillwater in the fall of the same year. In 1850, Mr. Neill was continued at St. Paul; Mr. Whitney at Stillwater; and during the fall, Rev. Mr. Seccombe arrived at St. Anthony Falls, and the Rev. Mr. Hall to Point Douglas and Cottage Grove.

EPISCOPAL MISSION.

In the summer of 1850, Rev. Messrs. Breck, Wilcoxson , and Merrick , located themselves at St. Paul as missionaries of the above named church to the Territory. They visit every neighborhood on foot, once in three weeks, from Fort Ripley to Point Douglass, and thence to the falls of St. Croix, besides maintaining regular service in St. Paul.

ORGANIZATION OF CHURCHES.

The first Protestant church organized in the Territory, was organized at Fort Snelling, in 1833 or 1834, as I am informed, by Dr. Williamson , Hon. H. H. Sibley and Col. Loomis , Elders. This church was dissolved soon after. The first permanent organization was of the Methodist Church, in 1844, by Rev. Mr. Hurlbut .

The following table will show when and by whom churches were organized in St. Paul:

TABLE SHOWING THE ORGANIZATION OF CHURCHES IN ST. PAUL.

Churches. When organized. Ministers. no wh'n orgz'd No at present Methodist E. Church, Dec. 81, 1848. Rev. B. Close. 8 52 Baptist Church, Dec. 29, 1849. Rev. J. C. Parsons.

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12 14 Presbyterian Church, Jan. 6. 1850. Rev. E. D. Neill. 9 15 Episcopalian Church, Not organized. Rev. Mr. Breck.

CHURCH ORGANIZATION AT ST. ANTHONY FALLS.

Churches, When organized. By whom. no wh'n orgz'd No at present Methodist E. Church, Oct. 1849. Rev. E. Stevens. 13 24 Baptist Church, July 13, 1850. Rev. W. C. Brown. 13 18 Presbyterian Church Sept. 1, 1850 Rev. Mr. Wheeler. 12 15 Episcopalian Church, Not organized.